

REMARKS

Claims 109-149 are pending. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants would like to thank Examiner Clow for the helpful and courteous discussion with their representative on November 14, 2006. During the discussion, amendments to obviate the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, were discussed. Disqualifying the cited reference Kurane et al., U.S. patent No. 6,699,661, as prior art against the present application was also discussed. The following remarks expand on the discussion with the Examiner.

The rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) based on Kurane et al. (U.S. patent No. 6,699,661) are respectfully traversed, because Kurane et al. is not available as prior art under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

Applicants confirm that the present application and Kurane et al., U.S. patent No. 6,699,661, were, at the time the invention claimed in the present application was made, subject to an obligation of assignment to the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology and Kankyo Engineering Co., Ltd. Accordingly, Kurane et al. is disqualified as prior art against the present application under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). See MPEP §706(l)(1)-(2).

The rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, is believed to be obviated by the amendments submitted above.

Claims 109, 110 and 143 have been amended as suggested by the Examiner during the discussion held with Applicant's representative on November 14, 2006.

In view of the foregoing, the claims are definite within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Withdrawal of this ground of rejection is respectfully requested.

Application No. 09/891,517

Reply to Office Action of September 28, 2006

The objections to the claims are believed to be obviated by the amendments submitted above. The claims have been amended as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully suggested.

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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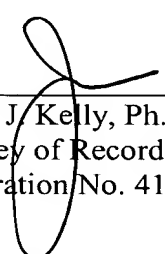
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